

Michigan
Department
of Human
Services

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
Communications
(517) 373-7394

*DHS cited in stories

Articles in Today's Clips

Tuesday, November 25, 2008

Please maximize your screen to read your clips

Subject	Page
Abuse-neglect	2-4
Adoption day	5-7
Food assistance	8-12
Medicaid	13
Nonprofits	14-17
Work First	18-19
News releases*	20-22



Kalamazoo man gets jail for putting baby in clothes dryer

Posted by Lynn Turner | Kalamazoo Gazette November 25, 2008 10:30AM

KALAMAZOO -- Trying to take a funny photograph, a Kalamazoo man put a friend's baby in a clothes dryer, not realizing it was hot and would burn the child.

Shawn Mikel Wright, 31, was sentenced Monday to 60 days in jail, two years of probation, ordered to not have contact with any children except his biological offspring and to take parenting classes. The June 2 incident happened in Pavilion Township. He was charged with second-degree child abuse for a reckless act that resulted in serious physical harm and earlier pleaded guilty.

He could have faced up to four years in prison.

A shouting match among relatives and friends of the parties in the case erupted in the hallway after he was sentenced. They were ushered from the courthouse.

The victim, a girl under age 1, suffered a "nasty burn" on her elbow and some other burns as a result, Kalamazoo County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney John Andregg said after Wright was sentenced.

"There was no indication he was acting with malice," Andregg said. "It was just a boneheaded move."

Wright was trying to take a "gag" picture and didn't know the dryer was hot, Andregg said. He said Wright didn't mean to hurt the baby.

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

Three children found safe after mother found dead in their Saginaw home Monday

Posted by The Associated Press and Journal News Service November 25, 2008 12:28PM

Flint Journal extras: Previous article: [Saginaw mother killed, now police seek missing daughters](#)

SAGINAW, Michigan -- Saginaw police say three girls whose mother was found slain in their home are safe. Their father is in custody.

Police had issued an Amber Alert for Elena Olguin, 9, Lillianna Olguin, 5, and Victoria Olguin, 3.

Police found the girls' mother's body inside their house about 6:30 p.m. Monday. Investigators were treating the death as a homicide.

A neighbor last saw the girls about 8 a.m. Monday as they left their home at 1413 Mackinaw in Saginaw with a man in a yellow two-door 1984 Buick Skylark with the Michigan license plate BW6981, Saginaw Police Sgt. Brian Lipe said.

A woman who heard an Amber Alert description of the vehicle alerted police she was following it south on M-52 near Oakley, and dispatchers alerted Shiawassee County authorities, who stopped them a few miles into that county, dispatchers there said.

Police said the girls were abducted by their father, whom they identified as 35-year-old Jose Angel Olguin.

The father had visited relatives in Elkhart, Ind., on Monday evening, before his wife's death was known, said Sgt. Brent VanderHaar. Police said the girls were with him at that time.

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.



Midland man gets jail term for child abuse

Posted by LaNia Coleman | The Saginaw News November 24, 2008 18:01PM

A Midland man is headed back to jail for child abuse.

Midland County Circuit Judge Jonathan E. Lauderbach on Friday sentenced Matthew S. Liedel, 28, to nine months behind bars with credit for 283 days already served, plus 18 months of probation, for first-degree child abuse.

Authorities have said Liedel on Jan. 1 took his 3-year-old son to MidMichigan Medical Center-Midland, telling staff the boy had a seizure.

Doctors transferred the tot to Hurley Medical Center in Flint, where doctors confirmed that the boy's injuries were not consistent with his father's claims.

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.



Families to be created, completed during Adoption Day proceedings today

Posted by Ashley A. Smith | The Flint Journal November 25, 2008 12:30PM

MUNDY TOWNSHIP, Michigan -- Today is a "blessed" day for Sanford and Sharon Hoyle and their three granddaughters.

Today the three little girls, Dyemesheann, 5, Alma, 4 and Daisanae, 2, will officially become Hoyles.

The Hoyles are joining four other families today who are finalizing their adoptions for Michigan Adoption Day.

"My wife and I have always worked with children and do community work and it's sad to see kids in these situations," said Sanford Hoyle, 51, of Mundy Township. "We thought it was our civilized duty to do what we can."

In celebration of Adoption Day, Genesee County Courts are inviting the public to view the proceedings at 2 p.m. in Judge Duncan Beagle's court.

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.



Tuesday, November 25, 2008

Big Day for Adoptions

<http://wkzonews.blogspot.com/2008/11/big-day-for-adoptions.html>

KALAMAZOO - It will be a very special Thanksgiving for hundreds of children in Michigan as they begin lives with new families. Today is the sixth annual "Michigan Adoption Day," and the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court will be one of 30 around the state taking part.

Kalamazoo County Probate Court Administrator Steve Burnham says it is a pleasant change on their end, even if it is just one day.

"We wish we could do this celebration every day," he tells 590 KZO. They'll be finalizing more than 2-hundred adoptions statewide, about 14 will be here in Kalamazoo.

"We have a little girl 22 months, all the way up to a boy who of eleven, a girl of twelve and another girl of thirteen," Burnham said.

Michigan has the largest single adoption day in the United States, he said.

Tuesday, November 25, 2008

<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2008811250304>

Oakland briefs

Pontiac:County marks Adoption Day

Today is Michigan's sixth annual Adoption Day, and multiple adoptions are being finalized in Oakland Circuit Court. Across the state, about 225 adoptions will be finalized. Some counties are holding open houses with speakers and information about the adoption process. Chief Justice Clifford W. Taylor said adoption finalization hearings are usually private, but many participating courts are opening their adoption hearings to the public.



\$672 a month gets little help from food stamps

Over 29 million now get assistance from program, but others go hungry

By Mike Stuckey

Senior news editor

updated 9:56 a.m. ET, Tues., Nov. 25, 2008

From the living room of her tiny apartment on the 10th floor of the Minnie Riperton building for senior citizens on Chicago's South Side, Adell Davis can see all the way to Lake Michigan. For that, she is truly grateful.

But she can also see the clock. And that inspires darker emotions as she uses it to space two daily meals, often just rice and toast.

"I get up in the morning at 5 o'clock. I fix coffee and watch the news," said Davis. "Around 9 or 10, I'll start fixing something to eat. About 12 o'clock, that's lunch, but I can't eat at 12. If I eat at 12 o'clock, I'm going to be hungry at 3 or 4 again anyway. So I'll wait until 3, and I'll just be hungry for three hours. Then I can have a little something. Nine, 10 o'clock at night, I have nothing to eat so I drink some water. And I always make sure I have coffee and sugar because that helps a lot."

Until recently, Davis, 63, hobbled by a pair of bum knees that she got from years as a letter carrier, had a little more food around the house because she was eligible for a monthly allotment of \$168 in food stamps. But when she moved into subsidized housing and her rent dropped dramatically, she lost virtually all of those benefits.

To many Americans, the food-stamp program is often little more than part of the entitlement debate between social-justice advocates and foes of big government. But to a record number of Americans — a record 29.5 million at last count and growing with the unemployment and foreclosure rates — the nation's largest domestic food assistance program is the difference between the misery of hunger and a manageable life.

Adell Davis is a living, breathing example of how poor one must be in these United States to receive help through the program run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service: With her Social Security income of just \$672 a month, Davis now qualifies for less than \$20 a month in food stamps, which she declines as more trouble than it's worth and because "I thought somebody else could use it better than me."

In turning down the benefits, Davis joined many other older Americans who also are eligible for some assistance from the food-stamp program but simply don't apply for it. That's a segment of the population especially targeted for assistance in these hard times by groups like Feeding America, the nation's largest network of food banks.

Barriers to benefits

Maura Daly, Feeding America's vice president for government relations and advocacy, said that as vital as the food-stamp program is to combating hunger, it has many barriers. Overall, just 67 percent of eligible recipients get food stamps, according to the USDA. Most who don't simply aren't aware that they are eligible, Daly said. Others "don't feel like the benefit is worth going through the process."

Still more are plagued by "inaccessible offices," Daly said, and a trend in some states to push more of the application process online, which is unhelpful to poor people without computer access. USDA spokeswoman Adriana Zorrilla added that "some people may also face transportation or language barriers."

And then there is the stigma often attached to receiving food-stamps, Daly and Zorrilla said, some of which comes from the public's misperceptions about who is eligible to receive the benefits and who actually gets them.

The 44-year-old food-stamp program, which was revised Oct. 1 and renamed the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, in part to fight the stigma, has strict eligibility criteria. Benefits are intended to go only to households with net incomes at or below the federal poverty level, which ranges from \$10,404 a year for single person to \$35,604 for a family of eight. Income limits are higher in Alaska and Hawaii.

A household generally cannot have more than \$2,000 in "countable resources," which includes cash and investments but excludes residences and some vehicles.

USDA statistics paint a stark picture of the financial status of food stamp recipients. Thirty-nine percent of households in the program have income of half or less of the poverty figure, while 15 percent have no cash income at all. Nearly half of recipients are children. Just 15 percent are working-age men. Only 5 percent receive general state welfare benefits. Seventy percent of households in the program have no "countable resources" and the average has just \$143.

Average monthly benefit: \$95 a person

A household's food-stamp benefit, which now comes in debit-card form, is calculated based on number of members, income and certain expenses. The maximum amount is \$176 for a single person, \$588 for a family of four and \$1,058 for a family of eight. The minimum monthly benefit is \$14. Nationwide, the average monthly benefit per person is \$95. But the median U.S. household spends nearly twice that on food per person — \$184 a month.

The program is not without problems typical of many entitlement programs and bureaucracies. The USDA says that fraudulent claims account for "less than 2 percent" of overall benefits, but that is still about \$600 million a year. Administrative costs are high — more than 21 percent of total federal and state funding in 2007 — and they vary wildly from state to state. For instance, South Carolina spent \$169 per household in 2007 on administrative expenses while California spent \$1,169, a whopping 38 percent of the average \$3,106 annual household benefit. The USDA is just beginning to examine the reasons for the disparities.

Feeding America's Daly expects the record number of recipients will swell as the economy worsens. Despite all the attention that dwindling 401(k) accounts and plummeting real estate prices are getting, "It's really the poor and the near poor who are least able to cope with economic changes," she said. "We have millions of Americans already living one disaster away from hunger."

She points to a recent acceleration in applications to the program: a 6 percent surge since the start of the year, a 10 percent leap from August 2007 to August 2008. Another increase is expected when September numbers are released in two weeks.

Anti-hunger activists are heartened by the campaign pledge of President-elect Barack Obama, who once trod the streets of Adell Davis' Chicago neighborhood as a community organizer, to end childhood hunger by 2015. They emphasize that the food-stamp program is a direct economic stimulus with each dollar of benefits generating nearly twice that much of a return to local economies, as the money spent at grocery stores helps pay salaries of everyone from clerks and truckers to farmers.

For many of those whose finances have deteriorated sharply due to the economy, the activists say, help can't come soon enough.

Food banks feel growing pressure

"Food prices have dramatically risen ... millions more people are having a hard time making ends meet," Daly said, noting that Feed America's member food banks have reported an average 20 percent increase in demand.

Davis said food banks and relatives keep her from starving, because once she gets her Social Security check, "after rent, phone and lights, I usually end up with \$200 a month. Basically, by the second week of the month, I'm flat broke. When I was getting food stamps, I was able to last maybe until the last week of the month.

"Some of the food pantries are really, really good and they give you enough food to have balanced meals for a week or two," she said. At one near her apartment, "They have name brands. You always get some fresh vegetables. They always have salad. You get some nice stuff. I have some gourmet salad dressing up there. If it wasn't for the church and the food pantries, there would be a lot of hungry people and the morgue would be full. There would be a lot more crime."

Davis helps stretch the donations by frequently eating meals with her mother, brother and three daughters, all successful businesswomen who are the pride of her life. Raising them as a single mom, Davis relied at times on food stamps and focused on making sure they got a good education. Now, "They would never apply for food stamps, they will just make it on their own," she said. "I am so proud of that."

So Davis is not starving, but like many people who have to worry about where the next meal is coming from, a lot of her thoughts revolve around food.

"I can't remember the last time I had bacon and eggs at my house. I cannot afford bacon, I cannot afford eggs. I haven't had an orange or a piece of fruit in years. I ... eat meat maybe three times a week," almost always chicken.

Silver-haired and quick to laugh and smile, Davis wants to clear up one misconception about food-stamp recipients: They are not whiners. "I'm not complaining. I'm not in a dirt blanket. It's not anybody's responsibility or anybody's fault that I'm in this situation. ... I walk into my apartment and say, 'Thank you, God, thank you, God,' for having my own place."

'Give us enough to eat'

But if she could give the powers that be a suggestion to improve the food-stamp program, it would be to loosen eligibility requirements and increase benefits. "Give us enough to eat off of for the whole month and stop penalizing us and looking over our shoulders and asking us, 'Do you eat with anybody? Is anybody giving you anything?'" It's a very depressing thing when you go in there and they want to know your life history."

With her \$672 monthly income the equivalent of a car payment or a night out for many of the Wall Street bankers whose

livelihoods were saved by the recent \$700 billion bailout by the federal government, that begs a question. "Since the government is giving away all this other money, why can't they give us enough to eat for a month, especially the seniors and the poor people?" Davis asks.

"They're not helping us to live. All we are doing is barely surviving."

© 2008 *msnbc.com*

URL: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27827700/>

[MSN Privacy](#) . [Legal](#)

© 2008 MSNBC.com



Those in need helping others with donations to Food Bank of Eastern Michigan; Students in Flint schools among those giving back

Posted by Kristin Longley | The Flint Journal November 24, 2008 18:23PM

Flint Journal extras*Third in the Faces of Hunger series.*

- [Part 1: Humbled by hunger.](#)
- [Part 2: Cost of food](#)

FLINT, Michigan -- Potter Elementary students are paying it forward to help fight hunger.

The need for food assistance is up more than ever among families at the northeast-side school, but Principal Anthony Sitko says his students are also setting a different, more inspirational record.

Two local churches recently gave Thanksgiving food baskets to the families of 20 Potter students -- and the elementary school responded by collecting a couple hundred food items to be donated to the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan, he said.

The drive, organized by the school's Youth Advisory Council, is an example of a subtle shift the food bank has seen in community service. In these poor economic conditions, kids seem to be understanding at a younger age the concept of helping the less fortunate, especially when they see it first-hand.

Flint Journal extras Many Flint schools are giving back this holiday season. Here are some examples of their generosity:

- Bryant Elementary: Holding a canned food drive to go toward Thanksgiving food baskets.
- Doyle-Ryder Elementary: Giving away 10 Thanksgiving food baskets.
- Freeman Elementary: Collecting money and canned food for holiday food basket.
- Southwestern Academy: Sponsoring baskets for the needy; Holding a classroom "Adopt-A-Family" project.

Source: Flint School District

Sixth-grader Marissa Ebert, who helped organize the food drive, said her family probably needs some help from time to time.

"I wanted to be able to help somebody else," said Marissa, who brought in cans of peas and corn. "I think we helped a lot of people."

Sitko said he often notices that the students who are in need of assistance are seeing that others also need help.

"The demand is up, but the generous giving was also up," he said. "These are tough times and students want to provide support for others who need it."

The food bank recently kicked off its annual month-long fundraising campaign, Face of Hunger. It's goal is to raise \$720,000, but food drives like the one at Potter also help the food bank's central mission.

"It shows the real philanthropic nature of our community," said William Kerr, food bank president. "It really is a wonderful example of generosity."

When people think about hunger, they often think of the homeless, Kerr said, but that's usually not the case with many food bank clients.

Many supporters of the food bank have at one point or another needed to use its services, he said. It's evidence that those who need help often feel the need to give back.

"We're not so much a community of haves and have-nots -- we're a community of equals," Kerr said. "Some of us have more than others at certain times and give back."

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

Stimulus package, Medicaid funding delayed until 2009

November 24 2008

<http://www.mcknights.com/Stimulus-package-Medicaid-funding-delayed-until-2009/article/121400/>

An economic stimulus package that contained up to \$37.8 billion in additional Medicaid funding for states has been shelved until January 2009.

Two different versions of the plan were introduced in both the House and the Senate recently. The two chambers of Congress could not reconcile their differences in time to pass either measure, while Republicans railed against what they considered an unnecessary increase in the budget deficit.

President-elect Obama has said a stimulus package is a top priority, and his newly appointed chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, has said that passing the stimulus package will be the "first order of business" in the new year, according to The Wall Street Journal.

In other news, Representative Henry Waxman (D-CA) seized the role of chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee from longtime leader John Dingell (D-MI) in a dramatic and unprecedented move. Waxman won a secret-ballot election among House Democrats Thursday by a vote of 137 to 122. In doing so, he upset a pecking-order process that had been in place for at least three decades. One of the committee's primary functions is to oversee the implementation of healthcare policy and reform.

Help wanted at area nonprofits

Posted by Brian McVicar | The Muskegon Chronicle November 24, 2008 22:57PM

The Thanksgiving holiday typically is when businesses and individuals open up their pocketbooks to help those in need. But with the economy reeling after September's stock market meltdown, the large donations that many area nonprofit agencies count on to meet community needs aren't there.

With unemployment in Michigan above 9 percent and many working people still unable to pay for basic needs, people are turning more and more to places like the Muskegon Rescue Mission and the Salvation Army for help.

That's presented a dilemma for many area nonprofits that provide housing, counseling, food and shelter: How do they address the needs of so many with so few dollars coming in?

Many agencies say they need a successful holiday fundraising season to maintain services.

"A lot of people are giving as much as they can, and we really appreciate that," said Katie Pinkston, Captain of services at the Muskegon area Salvation Army. "But because the economy is so bad right now, we've really seen the need for services go up and giving hasn't kept pace."

To accommodate the increased need, many nonprofits have made internal cuts instead of reducing services.

The Salvation Army, for example, which funds its operations totally through donations, has reduced its staff of seven employees to three, Pinkston said.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Salvation Army needs help delivering 2,500 Thanksgiving meals on Thursday. To volunteer, be at Reeths-Puffer High School at 10 a.m.

WHERE TO GIVE

There are many local need-based nonprofit agencies that need your time or financial donations. Some of them are:

- Muskegon Rescue Mission: 727-6090.
- Hope Lighthouse: 737-4673.
- Love INC: 777-3905.
- Mission for Area People: 733-9672.
- Catholic Charities: 726-4735.
- Every Woman's Place: 759-7909.
- Bethany Housing Ministries: 728-3117.
- Salvation Army: 773-3284.

At the same time, need has increased. In past years, the Salvation Army has provided turkeys for nearly 1,500 families. This year, the number has jumped to 2,500 families.

"There are so many people out of work who can't make enough money to support their families," Pinkston said. "Some of those people really rely on nonprofits to help them keep the lights on and to put food on the table."

Covering such expenses hasn't been easy, given the decline in funding.

"We've had to go into our general fund to cover the cost," Pinkston said. "If we use up all of our general fund money, we won't have money to pay for payroll and other expenses."

At the Muskegon Rescue Mission, which provides food and shelter to local residents, need also has risen dramatically over the past year.

In October of 2007, the organization served 4,300 meals. A year later, the number grew to 5,346 -- an increase of over 30 percent.

"The dramatic increase in need is expected to continue into the winter months and we are counting on the community's support to be able to meet these urgent needs," said Carla Skoglund, executive director of the Muskegon Rescue Mission. "We just need to keep reminding the community of the many, urgent needs of our neighbors. We know that people care and will respond when the need is made known."

With more need than ever, it isn't the best time to cut staff or benefits. But some nonprofits have no choice.

At the American Red Cross, which serves Muskegon, Oceana and Newaygo counties, employee benefits have taken a hit.

"These are really tough times and we're facing a lot of challenges," said Tim Lipan, executive director of the local Red Cross. "What makes it really tough is we can't exactly stop providing our services."

So the Red Cross has taken measures, including leaving vacant positions unfilled, eliminating contributions to its employees 401k accounts, reducing employee health benefits and freezing salaries.

"We're working harder and longer," he said. "Generating revenue has been a challenge."

Declining revenue also has resulted in the Red Cross having to dip into its funding reserves, Lipan said, adding that won't be an option in 2009 because reserve funds have shrunk below recommended levels.

"We will be faced with some tough decisions in 2009 on what to do with the decline in fundraising," Lipan said. "People need more help and nonprofits don't have the charitable donations coming in."

Dwindling donations aren't the only difficult task nonprofits are faced with these days. State and federal grants also have become more difficult to secure.

Every Woman's Place, a Muskegon nonprofit that provides shelter, food and other amenities to local women and young people, was unable to secure federal assistance for its Transitional Living Program for homeless youth in October 2007.

While the nonprofit has continued providing the service, aspects of the program such as counseling have been scaled back, said Christina Scarpino, director of development at Every Woman's Place.

"The program is functioning with limited staff who can only help teens with the basics -- food, shelter and some counseling and advocacy," she said. "There are currently 10 older teens in the shelter with 20 on a waiting list."

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

"We're struggling," United Way chief says

Posted by Mary Lawrence | The Saginaw News November 24, 2008 17:22PM

Organizers and volunteers for United Way of Saginaw County have successfully beat the bushes in the past, but this year's fundraising campaign is proving especially difficult.

"We're struggling," admits Cherrie Benchley, the charity's president and CEO.

Uncertainty surrounding the dismal economy is causing traditional United Way donors to tighten their purse strings. Volunteers since September have collected slightly more than \$1.6 million, or 62 percent of this year's \$2.6 million goal. Businesses and organizations will continue collections through December.

At this time last year, the county's largest charity had collected 57 percent of a \$2.4 million goal. It went on to surpass the target by \$7,400.

"Some of our donors are deciding not to give anything because they can't give at their previous levels. We're urging them to simply give something," Benchley said. "Every dollar counts. The focus is to collect enough in the campaign so that we don't have to cut funding to our agencies."

United Way helps support 23 agencies.

"Charities we surveyed have concerns about 2008 for the economy and the stock market and the impact they will have on giving," said Del Martin, chairwoman of Giving USA Foundation of Glenview, Ill., a consultant for nonprofit groups that tracks trends about charitable giving.

"I think the money is out there," said Jim Van Tiflin, 61, president of Citizens Bank's Northern Michigan Region and the 2008 United Way campaign chairman.

"There is an awful lot of negative attention to the economy right now. What that does is cause people to wonder if they're going to be affected because their jobs might go away or there may be cutbacks," Van Tiflin said.

"That causes them keep their hands in their pockets. They don't buy anything and they don't contribute to charitable causes."

He's hoping to pry more of those hands loose.

Nationally, charities saw a 3.9 percent rise in giving in 2007, reports the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University. Its survey concentrated on charities in the public-society benefit subsector. These include combined-purpose funds -- such as the United Way -- that reallocate donations to other charitable recipients.

Hard economic times are a double edged sword for nonprofit groups. They're among the hardest-hit victims during downturns, and the need for their services increases at the same time.

"We're busier than ever. People are stressed more than ever," said Margie M. Bach, CEO of Child and Family Services in Saginaw Township. The agency helps clients with little or no health insurance with their emotional health needs.

"Those United Way dollars are extremely important to our sexual assault counseling services. We use them to match federal grant money. We have three full-time therapists we wouldn't have if not for the United Way," Bach said. "We have one full-time position for the uninsured. That number of clients is increasing incredibly. Many have slipped through the cracks."

Child and Family Services has remained afloat for the past two years with a \$151,000 allocation each year from the United Way.

"Everyone is strapped (for money) right now. I'm hopefully optimistic that the United Way will meet its goal," Bach said. "If we're not here for our clients where will they go?"

After its 2006 campaign fell short, the United Way Board of Directors voted to tap reserve funds to lock in allocations to member agencies for two years.

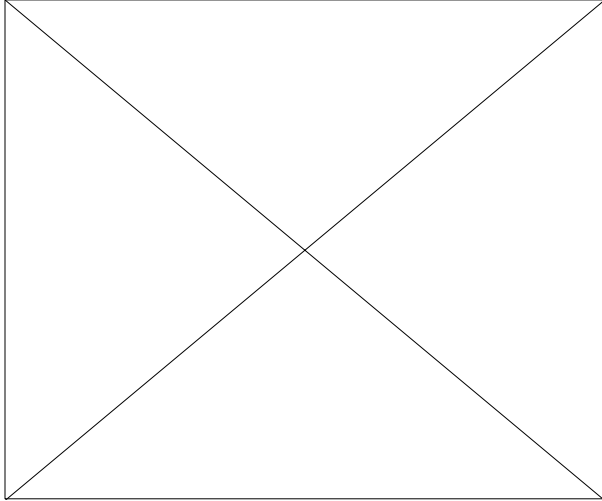
"We have a small emergency reserve remaining," Benchley said. "The board is prepared to do what we need to do to help the community, but we need the community to pitch in too. All our money stays right here in this community."

To contribute to the United Way fundraising campaign, send donations to: United Way of Saginaw County, 100 S. Jefferson, Saginaw, MI 48607.

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

Work First employees claim illegal termination

ADVERTISEMENT



By David Frownfelder
Daily Telegram
Mon Nov 24, 2008, 03:00 PM EST

ADRIAN, Mich. -

Alleging they were fired July 23 for reporting illegal activities to their supervisors in the Michigan Work First programs, two Lenawee County women filed a lawsuit under the federal Whistleblowers Protection Act seeking damages of at least \$25,000.

Donna Meyer of Tecumseh and Raquel Ybarra of Adrian filed the suit Oct. 8 in Lenawee County. Circuit Court Judge Timothy P. Pickard has set a pretrial hearing for Feb. 9.

The suit targets the Michigan AFL-CIO Human Resources Development Inc. (M-HRDI), based in Lansing. M-HRDI uses federal funding from the Michigan Jobs Commission and the federal Workforce Investment Act to retrain displaced workers under the federal Job Training Partnership Act administered through the Michigan Jobs Commission.

The lawsuit alleges that "(Meyer and Ybarra) were terminated for reporting forgeries or suspected forgeries." It seeks monetary damages under the protection of the Michigan Whistleblowers Protection Act. The explanations given for each woman's firing was for "violation of company policy," according to the suit.

Fran Sibley, executive director for M-HRDI, did not return telephone calls seeking a comment on the lawsuit.

Meyer began work as a case manager with the Michigan Work First program in 2003 and was promoted to career manager. The suit said she earned several awards for excellent customer service, especially in obtaining original signatures on both departmental and client documents.

Ybarra was hired as a career facilitator in 2004, and was promoted two years later to career manager. Noting she had done satisfactory work for two years, Ybarra alleged she received an "unfair and inaccurate performance evaluation in 2008."

Meyer alleged that on June 25, 2008, an intern preparing files for a state audit alerted her that a client had not signed his Individual Strategy Service form, which is required in order to receive state funds. The suit said the intern told Meyer, "she had been instructed to take the client's form to another employee because she was 'good at forging signatures.'"

Meyer said she told the intern that was illegal and unprofessional and told her to take the file to Meyer's supervisor, Bonnie Schuette. On July 3, Meyer reported to Anthony Rana, who is under contract to South Central Michigan Works (SCMW), that she had concerns over the work environment and work ethics, telling him of the June 25 incident.

Rana then sent e-mails to Keith Brown, facilities manager for SCMW, and Manny Salazar, manager of the CMW

Service Center in Adrian, according to the suit. The e-mail reported Meyer's concerns and asked about their investigation.

Sibley summoned Meyer to her Lansing office July 8 for a meeting. The result was an indefinite suspension without pay for Meyer. In her letter announcing the action, Sibley said the "charge of forgery is false," and that Meyer "maliciously misled Mr. Rana in order to cause damage to your fellow staff members and, indeed, M-HRDI itself."

Sibley further wrote in the letter: "As I said today, a charge of forgery is very serious and can lead to a loss of not only the SCMWI grant, but all of the grants we hold, causing nearly 100 people to lose their jobs."

Meyer was fired July 23.

In her part of the suit, Ybarra said she discovered program participant files were missing from her office on Jan. 21 and May 5. She also alleged that on June 25 she received a client file and discovered her signature had been forged in three places — the Individual Strategy Service form, the client and manager contract, and the participant contract form.

Ybarra said in the suit that on July 11, she contacted Sibley, Salazar and regional managers Brad Dyer and Ron Rose, complaining about the forgeries. She, too, was fired July 23.

On Oct. 6, Christine Green, attorney for the women, filed a motion for a jury trial in Lenawee County Circuit Court. The case was assigned to Pickard.

David Frownfelder covers northeast Lenawee County, including the Tecumseh, Britton and Clinton areas, for The Daily Telegram. He can be contacted at 265-5111, ext. 258, or via e-mail at frownfelder@lenconnect.com.

Comments (0)

Login or register to post a comment:

Login

Username:

Password:

[Forgot password](#)

Login

Register

Email:

First Name:

Last Name:

☐ I agree to the [terms of use](#)

☐ I am over 13 years of age

NOTE: Your inbox must accept emails from "no-reply@gatehousemedia.com"

Register

Michigan Arrest Records®

Lookup Free Arrest Records On Anyone In Michigan. Official Service

Michigan.GovArrestRecords.com

MI Genealogy Records

Access Michigan Vital, Birth, Death, Marriage & Divorce Records

PublicRecordsPro.com/Michigan

Termination

Dwnld free samples of HR policies, tools & easy HR manual solutions.

www.ppspublishers.com

Michigan State, City News

The Latest Michigan News by City or State. Get Breaking MI News Now.

Examiner.com



WEB BROWSING REDEFINED FIREFOX

Ads by Google

Michigan Department of Human Services Press Release

Media Contacts:

Gisgie Dávila Gendreau, marketing and public relations director, (517) 373-7394 or gendreaug@michigan.gov;

Emily Martinez, Lenawee Intermediate School District multicultural educational resources coordinator, (517) 265-1618.

American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month Celebrated

Nov. 25, 2008

ADRIAN, Mich. - The Native American Heritage Month planning committee and the Michigan Department of Human Services hosted the 11th annual Native American Heritage Month celebration at the Lenawee Intermediate School District's Tech Center in Adrian on Monday night.

Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm proclaimed November American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month in Michigan in conjunction with National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month. Events during this month will recognize the intertribal cultures and educate the public about the heritage, history, art and traditions of the American Indian and Alaska Native people.

Program participants included Emily Martinez, multicultural educational resources coordinator for the Lenawee Intermediate School District, and Stacey Tadgerson, director of Native American Affairs for the Michigan Department of Human Services.

The event also featured a "ghost supper," a meal commemorating friends and family members who have passed on to the spirit world, and a DVD presentation on Native American history.

"This month-long commemoration gives us an opportunity to celebrate the rich heritage and significant influence American Indians have contributed to our country's history," said Tadgerson. "It also reflects a commitment to tribal governments as an integral part of our state and nation's social, political and economic fabric."

For more information, please visit the DHS Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs or www.michigan.gov/poverty.

Michigan Department of Human Services News Release

Contact: Gisgie Dávila Gendreau, marketing and public relations director, (517) 373-7394
or gendreaug@michigan.gov

Michigan Department of Human Services celebrates Adoption Day in Wayne County

Nov. 25, 2008

This Thanksgiving, many Michigan families will have special reason to give thanks: the addition of new family members through adoption on Michigan's sixth annual Adoption Day.

Thirty Michigan counties held, or are holding, Adoption Day events on or about Nov. 25, the date designated by the Michigan Supreme Court as "Michigan Adoption Day." About 225 adoptions will be finalized around the state at these programs.

Tuesday morning, at the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center in Detroit, 22 children were adopted by six families in Judge Mary Beth Kelly's Third Judicial Circuit Court.

"Adoption Day is an opportunity to educate the public about the adoption process," Judge Kelly said. "It's a chance to demonstrate the challenges and rewards of being adoptive or foster parents."

The Detroit event was co-sponsored by the Michigan Supreme Court, the Michigan Department of Human Services, the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE), and the Family Services division of the State Court Administrative Office.

DHS Director Ismael Ahmed participated in the Wayne County event. "There are about 4,125 children in the foster care system who have the goal of adoption," he said.

"In 2008, DHS and private agencies supervised the adoptions of 2,700 children. While that number is commendable, let's do the math - we need more adoptive families. We need many 'adoption days' - not just now but throughout the year."

Anyone interested in adopting a child may contact MARE at (800) 589-6273 or visit www.mare.org. For more information about adoption, go to www.michigan.gov/dhs. For a complete list of state Adoption Day events, visit www.courts.michigan.gov/supremecourt/Press/MichiganAdoptionDayIndex.htm.

Michigan Department of Human Services News Release

Contact: Gisgie Dávila Gendreau, marketing and public relations director, (517) 373-7394

Michigan Department of Human Services, courts celebrate Adoption Day in Genesee County

Nov. 25, 2008

This Thanksgiving, many Michigan families will have special reason to give thanks: the addition of new family members through adoption on Michigan's sixth annual Adoption Day.

Thirty Michigan counties held, or are holding, Adoption Day events on or about Nov. 25, the date designated by the Michigan Supreme Court as "Michigan Adoption Day." About 225 adoptions will be finalized in programs around the state today.

Tuesday afternoon, at the Genesee County Court House in Flint, eight children were adopted by five families in Judge Duncan Beagle's Seventh Judicial Circuit Court.

"Adoption Day is an opportunity to educate the public about the adoption process," Beagle said. "It's a chance to demonstrate the challenges and rewards of being adoptive or foster parents."

The Flint event was co-sponsored by the Michigan Supreme Court, the Michigan Department of Human Services, the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE), and the Family Services division of the State Court Administrative Office.

DHS Director Ismael Ahmed participated in the Genesee County event. "There are about 4,125 children in the foster care system who have the goal of adoption," he said.

"In 2008, DHS and private agencies supervised the adoptions of 2,700 children. While that number is commendable, let's do the math – we need more adoptive families. We need many 'adoption days' – not just now but throughout the year."

Anyone interested in adopting a child may contact MARE at 800-589-6273 or visit www.mare.org. For more information about adoption, go to www.michigan.gov/dhs. For a complete list of state Adoption Day events, visit www.courts.michigan.gov/supremecourt/Press/MichiganAdoptionDayIndex.htm.